DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 179 329 RC 011 691

AUTHOR Angus, Max; And Others
TITLE Innovations in Rural Education: The Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme in Western Australia and the Chidley Educational Centre. Studies in Rural Education No. 3.
INSTITUTION Western Australian Education Dept., Perth. Research Branch.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 46p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; Correspondence Study; Curriculum Development; Home Study; Independent Study; Individual Instruction; Innovation; *Learning Disabilities; *Psychological Services; *Remedial Programs; *Rural Education; *Secondary Education; Tutorial Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Australia (Western Australia); Chidley Educational Centre (Australia); Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme; *Isolation (Geographic)

ABSTRACT

The reports of two innovative approaches to overcoming education problems in the isolated, sparsely populated areas of Western Australia are presented. Established in 1974, the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme has combined traditional forms of correspondence education with a curriculum development unit and the development of mechanisms to facilitate personal contact between students and tutors, as exemplified by the resident orientation camp in Perth. The courses in English, history, economics, human biology, mathematics, technical drawing, and art have been prepared to satisfy matriculation requirements. In the long term, these courses could also provide options for schools in larger population centers, making individualized study by senior students possible. The Chidley Education Centre, founded in 1976 in Perth, has provided residential remedial and psychological services for those rural children who develop acute learning problems because of their isolation. The involvement of parents has been an important function of the Centre as well as recent participation by local teachers and principals working to provide a smooth transition upon return to the home environment. (NEC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

STUDIES IN RURAL EDUCATION

ED179329

INNOVATIONS IN RURAL EDUCATION

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

RC 011691

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Max J Angus

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

STUDIES IN RURAL EDUCATION NO. 3

INNOVATIONS IN RURAL EDUCATION:

THE ISOLATED STUDENTS MATRICULATION SCHEME IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

AND

THE CHIDLEY EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

RESEARCH BRANCH

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

AUGUST, 1979

OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES

Educational Provision in Sparsely Populated Areas of Western Australia. (Studies in Rural Education No. 1). Education Department of Western Australia, West Perth, 1979.

Teacher Transfers. (Studies in Rural Education No. 2). Education Department of Western Australia, West Perth, 1979.

ISSN 0157-1761

ISBN 0 7244 8023 3

FOREWORD

This report is the third in the series being published by the Education Department of Western Australia entitled Studies in Rural Education.

The substance of the two papers which make up the report was drawn from two case studies, the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme (ISMS) and the Chidley Educational Centre, which were prepared as part of Western Australia's contribution to an international project conducted under the auspices of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Western Australia represented Australia in the project, which focused on education in sparsely populated areas.

These case studies provoked considerable interest from educationalists from the ten other OECD countries participating in the project. The Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme was of particular interest because it combined the traditional forms of correspondence education with concepts such as the incorporation of a curriculum development unit, and the development of mechanisms by which personal contact of students and tutors is fostered. The Chidley Educational Centre has other features of interest. It was established in 1976 to provide remedial and psychological services to children living in isolated areas. It came about as a response to the realization that access to specialist remedial education staff, guidance officers, and school psychologists was an acute problem for some rural children, particularly the isolated child living at home and working on correspondence lessons. Both these organizations thus represent innovative approaches to overcoming some problems facing education in the isolated areas of this State.

The paper on the Chidley Educational Centre was prepared by Mr M. Angus and Mr M. Williams from Research Branch and Mrs R. Hillen of the Chidley Education Centre. The paper on the ISMS was prepared by Mr Glen Diggins from the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme and Mr Michael Williams from Research Branch.

I wish to thank these people and the other Departmental officers who assisted in the preparation of the report.

D. Mossenson

D. MOSSENSON
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	FORWARD	iii
	THE ISOLATED STUDENTS MATRICULATION SCHEME	1
1.	INTRODUCTION	9
2.	ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHEME	14
3.	THE SCHEME IN PRACTICE	16
	3.1 Curriculum Development	16
	3.2 Course Implementation	17
	3.2.1 Orientation Camp	18
	3.2.2 Return of Work	19
	3.2.3 Reference Materials	19
	3.2.4 Where Work is Done	19
	3.2.5 Communication	20
	3.2.6 First Regional Tutor Visit	20
	3.2.7 May Camp	23
	3.2.8 Reports	23
	3.2.9 Second Regional Tutor Visit	23
	3.2.10 August Camp	23
	3.2.11 Student Visits to ISMS	24
	3.2.12 Mock TAE Examination	24
	3.2.13 Third Regional Tutor Visit	24
	3.2.14 End-of-the-Year Examinations	24
4.	OUTCOMES OF THE SCHEME	25
	4.1 Examination Results	25
	4.2 Student and Parental Evaluation	25
5.	PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SCHEME	28
	5.1 Problems for ISMS	28
	5.1.1 Student Motivation	28
	5.1.2 Social Development	28
	5.1.3 Career Opportunities	28
	5.1.4 Nature of ISMS	28
	5.1.5 Science	29
	5.1.6 Mail Services	29
	5.2 Possible Developments	29
	5.2.1 Microfiche	29
	5.2.2 Satellite Communications	30
	5.2.3 Local Tutoring	30

6. CONCLUSION 31

APPENDIX ONE 32

Chronology of the Scheme

APPENDIX TWO 34

Map of Western Australia indicating the location of ISMS students in 1979

THE CHIDLEY EDUCATIONAL CENTRE 37

1. INTRODUCTION 38

2. THE CHIDLEY EDUCATION CENTRE 41

2.1 Facilities 41

2.2 Staffing 42

2.3 The Children 42

3. THE PROGRAMME 47

4. DEVELOPMENTS AND PROBLEMS 52

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Distribution of Chidley Centre Students 1976-77, by Region and School Size	34

LIST OF FIGURES

1	Map of Western Australia, indicating the location of students participating in the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme, 1979	25
2	The Chidley Education Centre	31

THE ISOLATED STUDENTS MATRICULATION SCHEME

1. INTRODUCTION

Western Australia, with an area of some 2.6 million square kilometres, is Australia's largest State. Distances between towns are often great, since the State extends 2 200 kilometres from north to south and 1 600 kilometres from east to west. The population is small, slightly more than 1.2 million, and distributed most unevenly within the great land mass. Seventy per cent of the State's residents live in the Perth metropolitan region, and another 15 per cent live in the temperate south-west area. Only nine per cent of Western Australians live in the large area north of the Tropic of Capricorn.

It is within this geographical context that a centralized education system evolved. Education, for the most part, has been controlled from Perth since white settlement began in 1829. It is commonly claimed that centralization of control, including allocation of resources, ensures reasonable parity of education between schools in quite disparate communities. In principle, parents can expect similar standards of education for their children regardless of their location, although in practice minor differences inevitably arise.

The education system is divided into four stages: a pre-primary year, optional for students who turn five; seven primary years, known as Years 1 to 7; five secondary years, comprising Years 8 to 12; and a post-secondary or tertiary stage. Attendance at school is compulsory from the beginning of the year in which a child turns six until the end of the year in which he turns 15. Thus, a child usually proceeds to at least Year 10, and somewhat more than half of the Year 10 students proceed to Year 11. In addition, technical and further education is available for students who have completed their compulsory schooling, but who elect not to proceed to Year 11.

On completion of Year 10, students receive an Achievement Certificate based on school assessments and awarded by a central body, the Board of Secondary Education. The only external examinations are held at the end of Year 12, and are intended to determine the eligibility of students to enter tertiary institutions. These are Western Australia's Tertiary Admissions Examinations (TAE). Over half of Year 12 students proceed to post-secondary education.

Year 12 students also receive a Certificate of Secondary Education which is based on a combination of TAE results and school assessments. Like the Achievement Certificate, it is awarded by the Board of Secondary Education.

Although education is a State Government responsibility, a dual system of Government and non-Government schools has developed. Eighty per cent of Western Australia's 400 000 students attend Government schools, which are free, secular, and open to all. The majority of non-Government schools are Roman Catholic, and all receive financial assistance from the State and Federal Governments. The Education Department of Western Australia operates Government schools and provides extensive support services at both the central and regional levels.

More than 600 schools are maintained by the Education Department, and one-quarter of these have a secondary component. Secondary schools are mainly confined to towns of more than 500 people, but primary schools have been established in even the smallest pockets of settlement. In larger centres, high schools and senior high schools enrol students in Years 8 to 10 and 8 to 12 respectively. District high schools are located in smaller country towns, and consist of a combined primary and lower secondary school, usually admitting students up to Year 10. Rarely does the secondary student enrolment in a district high school exceed 150.

Children living in remote, sparsely populated areas without nearby schools can enrol with the Western Australian Correspondence School for Years 1 to 10. Correspondence students of primary school age may also study with a School of the Air. Five Schools of the Air, which transmit lessons by radio, are located in the north and east of the State. The Government has provided further support by establishing fourteen high school hostels in larger towns where secondary children from sparsely populated areas can board away from home. Other Government benefits for these children include living away from home allowances and three return air fares from school to home each year. Also some parents elect to send their children to independent schools in Perth or major towns. Various forms of Government assistance are available in such cases.

The Isolated Schools Matriculation Project was established in 1974 by the Education Department of Western Australia as part of an initiative to increase the range of educational opportunities available to rural residents. The major aim of the project was to develop modern correspondence courses for rural matriculation students. Acknowledgement of the project's importance was given at the Federal level by the Schools Commission, which supplemented the State's allocation of funds to the project during 1974 and 1975 and again in 1977-1979. Six highly qualified and experienced teachers were appointed to begin the preparation of courses for matriculation students in sparsely populated areas. The Project evolved into the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme which is reviewed in this paper.

The Scheme was to develop and evaluate curriculum materials, including student guides, that would enable students to master matriculation level subjects without immediate access to continuing specialized teacher support. It was recognized that the scheme must include an effective structure for despatching course materials and returning student work. Tutorial support for students with learning difficulties was also necessary. It was expected that the enrolments would consist of two categories of students who wished to pursue their matriculation studies while living at home. There would be those who lived near a district high school, and who, therefore, had access to resources such as the school library. However, the school would not be able to offer matriculation tuition for reasons of economy. The second group would consist of truly isolated students who lived on farms and in tiny communities and who, thus, had no access to secondary schools near their homes.

A group of subjects that would satisfy matriculation requirements as well as varied interests was chosen for development. However, the subjects also had to be practically viable under correspondence conditions. For example, the practical problems of providing extensive and complicated laboratory equipment to a small number of students prevented the inclusion of the physical sciences, although the biological sciences could be represented. For these reasons, English, history, economics, human biology, two mathematics courses, technical drawing and art were included in the Scheme.

Students in small rural towns and on pastoral properties, with few peers of comparable age, have special social needs. For these students to be educated in the fullest sense it was important that they associated with peers and acquired social skills such as co-operating, mixing, and learning to be leaders and followers as various situations demand. In order to meet these needs, it was proposed that students integrate with their fellow students at residential camps and on other occasions.

Students were to be assisted to acquire study habits for each subject that would enable them to work without supervision. Attention would be given to this need in a student's course by tutors and other staff engaged in the Scheme.

It was believed that the Scheme would have a profound effect on secondary education in Western Australia, since it constitutes an alternative route to matriculation. In the longer term, the Scheme could also provide options for schools in larger centres which have so few students wishing to study a particular subject that conventional instruction is not possible. The Scheme makes individualized study by senior students a realistic prospect.

2. ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHEME

Since the establishment of the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme in 1974, a programme for producing curriculum materials and providing learning support has been developed. Appendix One contains a chronology of this development. In this section, however, the organization, as it exists in 1979, is described with only limited reference to the changes which have occurred.

ISMS operates as a special school attached to the Head Office of the Education Department. It is funded by the State Government with minor contributions from the Federal Government through the Joint Country Disadvantaged Schools Programme. More than $500 000 was allocated from the State budget in the 1978-79 financial year for recurrent expenditure, supplemented by a further $7 500 from the Federal programme.

Throughout 1974 and 1975, the Scheme was directed by the Superintendent of the Research Branch of the Education Department. Weekly meetings were held to discuss progress, make recommendations and develop Scheme policy. An education officer of the Research Branch was appointed to look after such specific management areas as access to typists, obtaining research materials, purchase of resources and equipment, liaison between the Scheme and other Branches of the Department. Since the beginning of 1976, the Scheme has been managed by a senior education officer who was selected from the original staff team.

Staff are employed by the Education Department, and are classified as education officers, tutors, or ancillary staff. The 1979 staff comprises three education officers, 17 tutors and four ancillary staff.

Education officers undertake course development work under the control of the Curriculum Branch of the Education Department. They are senior teachers selected by senior Education Department officers with responsibilities in various subjects on the basis of their qualifications, experience, and writing skills. Two or three years is the usual term of appointment for an education officer. During this time, the education officer is involved in writing and producing course materials, and in course evaluation.

Tutors are qualified teachers appointed to support students enrolled in the Scheme. They correct student work and correspond with individual students taking a particular subject. It is their responsibility to monitor students' progress, and to provide encouragement. Tutors also contribute significantly to course evaluation and revision since they have most contact with students.

Some tutors accept the additional role of regional tutor, taking responsibility for the overall progress of students within one of eight geographical regions of Western Australia. A regional tutor has an important part to play in the pastoral care of the Scheme's students. This person not only monitors the general progress of students, but also arranges contact between students, parents and teachers in a region.

Each tutor specializes in one subject area, and supervises all students taking that subject at either the Year 11 or Year 12 level. Selection of tutors for the Scheme is the subject superintendent's prerogative. Tutors are expected to demonstrate a commitment to rural education, teaching skill, patience, and a sense of humour. They, like education officers, are usually appointed for two or three years.

Ancillary staff include typists, a teacher aide and a clerical assistant, all of whom are instrumental in the efficient routine operation of the organization. In addition to typing, ancillary staff maintain the stock of curriculum materials, keep records, despatch mail, and undertake general clerical duties.

The ISMS staff are located at a Government primary school in Perth, where vacant classrooms have been converted into offices and other facilities. A despatch and typist's room, a storeroom and recording room, and a student classroom are included in the accommodation. The students' room contains art, science, and drawing facilities as well as carrels for quiet study. Up to five students can use the facility at once.

3. THE SCHEME IN PRACTICE

The Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme has entailed both the development of curriculum materials and the subsequent implementation of courses. At present, materials for economics, biology and physical science are being developed by the Scheme's three education officers, but work on other subjects has concluded, apart from minor revision by tutors. Major aspects of the Scheme are outlined below.

3.1 Curriculum Development

A common matriculation syllabus exists for each subject studied at Year 11 and 12 level in Western Australia. The main problem in curriculum development, then, was to prepare or adapt materials which would enable students working in isolation to meet the requirements of existing syllabi.

Examination of existing correspondence material was undertaken in the second half of 1974. During this period, the original project team also familiarzed themselves with recent developments in audio-visual learning techniques. Areas of the State in which the Scheme was likely to operate were visited by the team, so that problems caused by isolation could be anticipated. The results of these investigations guided the team in the production and use of learning materials.

Printed materials form the basis of ISMS learning materials. Subjects are developed around existing textbooks, which are purchased by students and supplemented by printed ISMS material. Material to compensate for sections of the syllabus not covered satisfactorily in texts are developed by the education officers.

A loose-leaf format is used so that revision can be undertaken easily. Students are provided with binders in which to store their materials. Printing is carried out on small offset machines with colour being achieved either through black ink on coloured paper or coloured ink in white or coloured paper. Printing runs are sufficient for two years' needs. Printed materials, including binders, are retained by the students.

It was recognized that the production of printed and audio-visual materials required extensive quality control. The Publications and Audio-Visual Branches of the Department were involved through their respective superintendents. Subject superintendents personally contributed to the exercise by examining materials and suggesting improvements. Advisory staff of the Curriculum Branch also assisted in the development of audio-visual materials in certain subjects.

Audio-vidual materials include audio cassettes, film-strips and slides. Each student is loaned a cassette record-player, a set of headphones and a slide/film-strip viewer.

Students come from a variety of home backgrounds. Some families are financially destitute while others could afford to send their children to boarding school if they chose. In some instances, the home situation might constitute an obstacle to study, as in the case of two students who do not have electric lights in their isolated homestead.

The group contains a substantial proportion of mature-age students (23 out of 150). Like their younger counterparts, these students have opted to study five matriculation subjects over a period of two years. Students are sometimes advised to extend this to three years by ISMS staff.

One may speculate why more than 80 per cent of the Scheme's students are female. Perhaps a factor is that parents are still more inclined to send their sons rather than their daughters away to boarding school. An associated factor may be that girls are more likely than boys to remain at home beyond the school leaving age, despite the difficulties that young, single females are experiencing in obtaining employment.

Among the group there is also a proportion of unmarried mothers, five in 1979. Without a Scheme of this type, matriculation studies may be impossible.

Approximately 25 to 30 per cent of initial enrolments withdraw by the end of their Year 11 course. However, few withdrawals occur among Year 12 students.

3.2.1 Orientation Camp

An orientation camp is held during the first 10 days of the school year for Year 11 students and new Year 12 students. All students are brought to Perth, at no expense to themselves, and accommodated in residential facilities provided by the Education Department. During this camp, many activities are undertaken, viz.

(a) students are introduced to the working operation of the Scheme. Roles of tutors and regional tutors, arrangements for despatch and return of materials, personal timetable guidance, and the use and maintenance of audio-visual equipment are all explained.

(b) students are familiarized with the content and presentation of each subject area and given guidance concerning final course selection.

(c) students start work on the first units of the subjects they have selected. Textbooks may be purchased through the Scheme bookshop. Year 12 students who do not attend camp receive a programme of work before school begins. Additional forms of support are presently under consideration.

Page 8, blank page

(d) students get to know their tutors, regional tutor and the support staff in a live-in situation. All staff spend time overnight at the camps and, as a general rule, are on first name terms with the students. This policy has assisted in the establishment of sound working relationships between students and tutors.

(e) students get to know each other through carefully designed recreational programmes carried out by specialist staff of the Physical Education Branch of the Education Department.

3.2.2 Return of Work

Once the school year has begun, students send work back to their tutors regularly. Units of study vary in duration from three to 10 weeks, depending on the subject. However, work is expected at least once per fortnight and preferably once a week. Postage costs both ways are met by the Scheme.

The task of the tutor is to support the student in using the learning materials. For example, additional explanation, either written or recorded on an individual basis, is provided. Of course, the tutor also assesses and records student progress. Usually, student work is corrected and despatched from the ISMS centre within 48 hours, although the mail services determine how long it takes for students to receive the processed work.

3.2.3 Reference Materials

The learning materials are backed up by collections of reference materials lodged in the libraries of the 22 district high schools participating in the Scheme. Each collection comprises some 300 reference books and 60 items of audio-vidual material, which are available to ISMS students who are affiliated with the district high school. In the case of students remote from these centres, tutors send a suitable range of reference materials with each [illegible] study unit.

3.2.4 Where Work Is Done

Places of work vary. Students who live in a locality served by a district high school have access to the resources of the school and some do all their daytime work there. Schools have been generous in the support to students. Timetables have been arranged so that access to laboratory and art facilities is available. Staff have taken a great interest in the progress of students and have frequently been able to solve areas of difficulty. Librarians have been of special help in maintaining the reference material that is housed in the school library. The support and interest of principals have been crucial in district high schools; without it the Scheme might not be successful in these localities.

Arrangements vary from student to student, and school to school. However, students inevitably do much of their work at home. The typical pattern for ISMS students in district high schools is three days at home and two at school. Of course, students in more remote areas have no choice and must do all their work at home.

3.2.5 Communication

A vital part of the Scheme is the maintenance of communication between student and tutor. Written communications are employed, but there has also been a significant development in the use of the spoken word. Audio cassettes are exchanged between student and tutor, and have opened up fresh avenues for communication. The use of cassettes enables students to request specific assistance and have difficulties explained. These cassettes have been found to be of great value to staff and students alike.

However, neither the written nor cassette communications can solve immediate pressing problems. The telephone is often used by those students with access to it. Principals of district high schools have been generous in allowing students to use the school telephone to assist their progress. Students at home with a connected service may telephone a problem to ISMS headquarters and receive a return call from their tutors. In this way, student expenses are kept to a minimum.

3.2.6 First Regional Tutor Visit

Three weeks after the completion of the orientation camp, students are visited by their regional tutor. The purpose of this visit is to

(a) discuss progress with students and parents in their home environments. If such visits cannot be undertaken because of the distance involved or time available, some central meeting point is arranged. All students are involved, since this visit is seen as an essential form of support.

(b) have discussions with district high school staff, where appropriate, to see that school-student relationships are progressing satisfactorily.

During this time, new staff members are also given the opportunity to visit country regions within driving range of Perth so that they can meet students undertaking courses of study.

The regional tutor is a vital link between the ISMS organization and the student, since he is the person a student approaches regarding course or career advice. He may not be able to help directly, but will know who to approach to get the required assistance.

1

1. Almost three-quarters of the 150 students enrolled with ISMS have access to a district high school. School librarians have been of special help in maintaining the reference material housed in school libraries.

2. Although some students do all their work at schools, many do much of their work at home.

3. At the camps, students have an opportunity for concentrated study as well as personal contact with tutors and other students.

4. Regional tutors regularly visit students. Progress and problems are discussed with students, parents and district high school principals where applicable.

5. Students visit ISMS headquarters in Perth where an opportunity for personal assistance or career advice is available from tutors.

2

3.2.7 May Camp

In May (during the usual two-week school holiday period) a 10-day camp is held for Year 12 students. This camp provides an opportunity for concentrated study, when specific difficulties that students might have encountered can be identified and remedied. The camp is also used for career guidance. Visits to tertiary institutions, banks, hospitals and other places of interest are part of the Scheme's career guidance programme.

For many Year 12 students, this is the first time they have had personal contact with tutors new to the staff. The experience of day-by-day personal attention is valuable, serving both to stimulate students and provide practical assistance.

3.2.8 Reports

The ISMS working year is divided into two semesters. The first semester ends on 30 June and during the final week of the semester all students sit for examinations. These examinations are part of the Scheme's assessment programme, the other part being based on the quality of work submitted through the year.

A detailed first-semester report is received by each student in the first two weeks of July. This report indicates progress and standards of work submitted as well as results in the above examinations.

3.2.9 Second Regional Tutor Visit

In the third week of July, regional tutors undertake another series of visits to the students within their regions. This visit is similar to the March visit, but reports are also discussed. Overall progress is discussed with students, parents and, where applicable, district high school principals.

3.2.10 August Camp

A 10-day camp for Year 11 students is run during the first two weeks of August, which is the beginning of spring. This camp is chiefly designed as a camp with a practical orientation, where activities beyond the scope of correspondence can be undertaken. For example, biology excursions are carried out and students experience the learning benefits of group discussions.

The camp is also a time for renewal of acquaintances - tutor with student and student with student. The motivation value of these days spent together is enormous.

Pg 13 blank - dark photos

3.2.11 Student Visits to ISMS

Student visits to ISMS headquarters in Perth may take place at any time of the year and usually extend over one week. The visits give students a further opportunity to overcome difficulties or receive career advice through personal contact with their tutors, A room has been set up at ISMS headquarters where visiting students can work during the day. Normally, students stay with relatives or friends living in Perth, thus reducing expenses. Transport costs are reimbursed by the Government. Regional tutors arrange student visits to the ISMS centre.

3.2.12 Mock TAE Examinations

Early in October, a set of examinations is held for Year 12 students. These cover the entire syllabus for each subject, and are seen as a final practice for the Tertiary Admissions Examinations in late November.

3.2.13 Third Regional Tutor Visit

In early November, the regional tutors again visit their students. The purpose of this visit is

(a) to give final advice to the Year 12 students regarding their Tertiary Admissions Examinations.

(b) to provide moral support to Year 11 students, who have a tendency at this time of the year to have doubts about the purposes and benefits of their work. This is a difficult time for young people and often they find it difficult to accept the advice and support of their parents. The regional tutor contact, therefore, can be of great benefit.

(c) to interview prospective students and their parents in order to explain the Scheme and offer advice on course selection.

3.2.14 End-of-the-Year Examinations

As mentioned above, Year 12 students sit for their Tertiary Admissions Examinations which usually commence around the 20 Nove[illegible]r. A set of ISMS examinations for Year 11 students is conducted at about this time too.

4. OUTCOMES OF THE SCHEME

4.1 Examination Results

The Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme prepares students for the Tertiary Admissions Examination. Although increasing numbers of mature-age students are enrolling, it is not intended to divert the Scheme from its original purpose at this stage. While it is to be hoped that students will gain self-esteem and social confidence, the main indicator of the Scheme's success is academic achievement.

However, it must be recognized that the Scheme's students constitute a group that differs considerably from the population of students undertaking matriculation studies in schools. In addition to the distinctive home backgrounds of the Scheme's students, there are differences in academic preparation. Most of the ISMS group obtained only average Year 10 results, although a few were outstanding. By contrast, students who proceed to Year 12 in high schools tend to have had above-average results in Year 10.

At the time of writing, two groups of students have completed Year 11 and 12 and have taken the Tertiary Admissions Examinations. The overall performance of these groups has been satisfactory. For example, in 1977, six of the 21 students who took the examinations were accepted for tertiary studies, including primary teaching, computer programming, public administration, Asian studies, and psychology. In 1978, of the 25 students who took the examinations, at least seven were accepted into tertiary institutions, one student was equal seventh in the State in the history examinations, and another equal ninth in the art examination. The progress of these people will be followed with interest, because it is believed that individual study talents developed through ISMS should be of great benefit in tertiary studies.

4.2 Student and Parental Evaluation

Throughout the two full years of operation, parents and students have been encouraged to contribute to the development of the Scheme. Many letters have been received. Comments have generally been laudatory, e.g.

> *... we, (the parents) have nothing but praise for the Scheme to date, and of the dedication of the teachers involved. The personal interest and aid they give is a great encouragement to the students ...*
>
> *... it is quite apparent that together with your skill, you have put in much of yourselves by way of your time and encouragement to ensure the best results and opportunity for students ...*

Suggestions for improvement have also been made. For example,

> *... we wonder, however, if it would not be a good thing if the students were called upon, say once a month or at least twice a term, by one or some of their tutors - I am inclined to think they are still rather young ...*

> *... I feel it may help if progress reports were sent to students indicating all other students' progress (comparison). This could be done every month or so and may encourage those are are behind to speed up a bit ...*

At the end of 1977 and 1978 evaluation questionnaires were sent to all Year 12 students. The questionnaires contained 50 items, covering the entire range of the Scheme as set out in the section 'The Scheme in Practice'.

The following are samples of students' comments:

What social benefits did you experience at camps?

> *... we were able to get to know both tutors and other students, and we learned to speak out about our feelings and the problems we faced in the course. The tutors listened ...*

> *... meet other students, saw how they looked at life and school, and attitudes towards living in general ...*

> *... it joined us together; tutors and students ...*

Did you receive enough staff support.

> *... whenever we needed help all we had to do was to ask for it and it was provided ...*

> *... I received a tremendous amount of support from all the tutors. It was this support that helped me to continue with my work ...*

> *... if we wanted it, it was always there. We were never neglected ...*

Parents were also asked to comment. Their responses were more general:

> *... We were very pleased with the ISMS course. It allowed ------- to further her education in a home environment - which she wanted - without the hassle of finding during-the-week accommodation. She thoroughly enjoyed the course and we also felt very involved in it. The tutors were great - always helpful and encouraging; treating students as individuals, questions and queries never being a bother to them ...*

... I was satisfied with all aspects of the course and felt -------- applied herself well and the tutors gave their all. I feel the financial assistance given was generous. Despite the TAE results (which were worse than expected), -------- knowledge greatly increased. Finally, having -------- at home for those important two years while she matured that much was rewarding to us ...

... I am very pleased what ------ has done these two years with ISMG, it certainly hasn't been two wasted years. I used to worry and think of all the things she was missing out on by not going to boarding school, but the way they have gained knowledge by this method the students are going to remember all they have learnt much longer than by going to an ordinary school ...

The only thing that I think might improve the course is when you have your camp in May for the Year 12 students you could get a good guidance officer to come and talk to them and provide all the literature about careers.

... We appreciate very much what the Scheme has done for ------- over the past two years, I wish it was only the beginning and not the finish.

The responses of both students and parents were generally in favour of the Scheme as it operates at present. It was hoped that the questionnaire would point to areas of weakness, but critical comments were rare.

5. PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS OF THE SCHEME

5.1 Problems for ISMS

The Scheme has been developed as a worthwhile alternative to traditional upper-secondary-school education. The features described earlier constitute an extensive framework within which students can receive the tuition and support necessary for success. Despite the Scheme's provisions, the nature and conditions of study give rise to some problems which affect isolated students more acutely than their counterparts in secondary schools. Some of these problems are discussed below.

5.1.1 Student Motivation

Motivation in all forms of education is important and particularly so in correspondence education. Camps, visits, frequent communication, and other measures all help, but without personal drive students are unlikely to have success. Students who enrol should want to succeed.

5.1.2 Social Development

Students working by themselves or in small groups are severely handicapped socially. The social interaction experienced at camps is good for all students, but those students attending large schools daily have an obvious advantage in this regard.

5.1.3 Career Opportunities

Country children throughout Australia generally have less knowledge of careers available than their city peers. The smaller communities covered by ISMS are particularly disadvantaged in this respect. Although the Scheme offers career assistance, opportunities for gaining first-hand knowledge are insufficient. This is an area urgently requiring attention.

5.1.4 Nature of ISMS

Not all students complete Year 10 with the background of potential for successful matriculation study. Because only matriculation courses have been developed so far, some students find themselves attempting study at a level somewhat beyond their capacity. Non-matriculation subjects, more suited to this type of student, are now being offered by senior high schools. Extending the range of ISMS subjects to include certain of these non-matriculation subjects might be beneficial. However, such an extension would significantly alter the accepted function of the Scheme, and would require a deliberate policy change.

5.1.5 Science

As explained earlier in this paper, the physical science area was avoided in the initial subject development and only biological-science subjects were prepared. This has led to an imbalance in the range of subjects available. Furthermore, because of the experimental nature of the subject, biology was initially limited to district high school areas. Although all students may now do biology, this means that the only science subject that students working in total isolation can elect to study is biological science.

Revision of the science course is now being undertaken, with the aim of making it widely available to all interested students. A new matriculation subject, called physical science, is being developed by the Curriculum Branch for secondary schools to provide students with an alternative to physics and chemistry. It is also being adapted for use by ISMS. These initiatives should lead to increased attention by students to the science area in the near future.

5.1.6 Mail Service

All school correspondence operations are limited by the efficiency of their despatch and retrieval organization. Once material has arrived at its destination, work can proceed, but the period between despatch and delivery time is lost time. Because of the distances involved and, often weather conditions, delivery of mail to every doorstep is impossible. Delays affect the learning process because, although students can be supplied well in advance with work to be done, the delay of tutor support can often prevent progress.

5.2 Possible Developments

There are many developments in technology which will ultimately affect ISMS. Some of these are described below.

5.2.1 Microfiche

The use of microfiche could revolutionize the format of presentation of printed and other visual material. Readers, too, are light and unsophisticated, leading to the benefit that a whole year's course could be despatched in a small package.

The microfiche system may be a significant medium for course presentation if users become familiar with its potential.

5.2.2 Satellite Communications

Advances in communication as a result of satellite networks will have an enormous effect on outback Australia. A task force is currently hearing evidence throughout the country, and will make recommendations to the Federal Government. Should an Australia-wide network be set up, allowing a two-way exchange of conversation between centrally located tutors and isolated students, the educational benefits for ISMS would be immense. In any case, such systems will undoubtedly affect the way in which courses are presented.

5.2.3 Local Tutoring

Future technological developments can easily be seen to provide greater flexibility in the presentation of learning materials, but they will require new structures for supporting isolated students. One obvious avenue of development in the support mechanism is the involvement of local specialists as tutors. Such on-the-spot experts would be of great benefit to students, not only because problems could be solved quickly and personally, but also because the education will be involving the local community. Identifying suitable people where they exist and developing such arrangements will be a challenge for the future.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, an attempt has been made to review the development and operation of the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme.

The five years of development of the Scheme have been rewarding to all those involved, not only because of the new skills acquired and the sense of achievement felt in seeing one's efforts transformed into printed pages, photographs, or cassette recordings, but particularly because of the close involvement with students. Staff consider that correspondence teachers tutoring one person at a time, have more opportunity to relate to the 'person' in their students than do classroom teachers. It is rewarding to be able to give as much of one's self and one's knowledge.

The following guidelines for prospective developers of similar programmes emerge from the experience of the ISMS staff.

- A balanced choice of subjects should be selected for initial preparation.
- Talented course-writers are needed. These people need to be practically oriented.
- Media should not be too sophisticated for the clientele.
- An extensive support mechanism should be developed alongside course materials. No matter how good the learning materials are, the tutors will still do a large proportion of the teaching.
- Camps and other opportunities for personal interaction between student and tutor are essential.
- Where local schools exist, access to their facilities should be arranged. Additional resources provided on site are an advantage.
- The development of a comprehensive career-guidance programme to complement the learning programme is essential.

APPENDIX ONE - CHRONOLOGY OF THE SCHEME

The Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme's development is summarized below. References are made to the effectiveness of course implementation during 1976 and 1977 where appropriate.

STAGE 1: Second half of 1974

- Examination of existing national and international correspondence materials and determination of the approach to be adopted.
- Establishment of channels of communication between the curriculum developers and specialist branches within the Education Department.
- Establishment of procedures for quality control of materials production.

STAGE 2: 1975

- Production of Year 11 materials.
- Planning of administrative procedures necessary for successful implementation of the scheme.
- Enrolment of students to comprise a test group.

STAGE 3: 1976

- Evaluation of the Year 11 phase of the scheme with the first group of students. The first group of 30 students (20 girls, 10 boys) was drawn from five district high schools within 400 kilometres of Perth. In each school, the eight or less students formed an unsupervised class, located usually in a seminar room attached to the library. This arrangement was unsatisfactory because the group tended to be noisy. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the inclusion of Year 11 and 12 students in the next year would strain the schools' accommodation resources. Consequently, flexible daily working arrangements were adopted, which entailed a mixture of school and home work.
- Production of Year 12 materials for use in 1977.
- Identification of a second group of students over a wider area of the State.

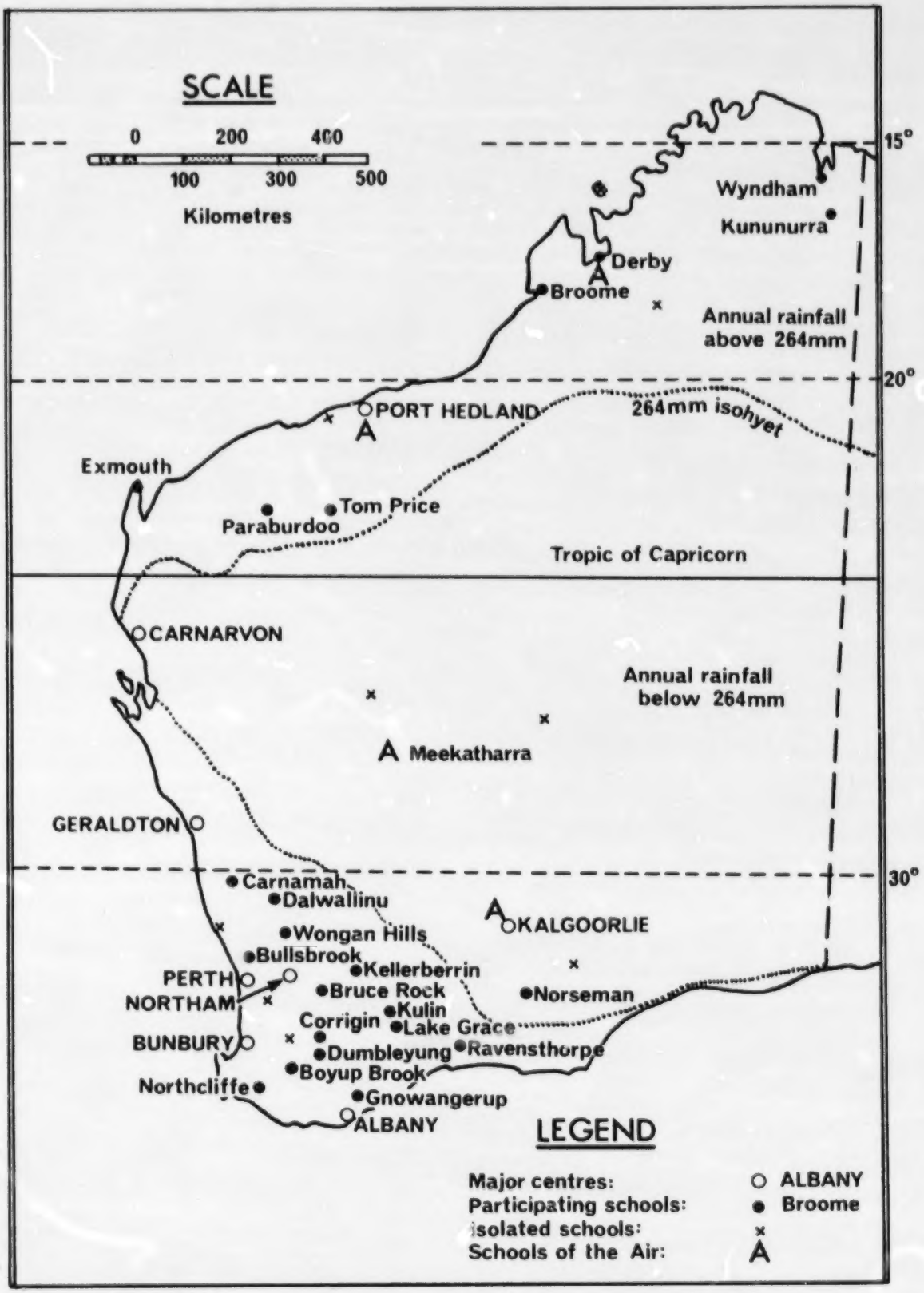
STAGE 4: 1977

- Use and evaluation of the Year 12 materials with the first group of students. Twenty-two such students were enrolled.
- Introduction of the second group of Year 11 students, 46 in number, to the Scheme, incorporating changes based on the 1976 experience.
- Expansion of the scheme to include another district high school and five completely isolated students.
- Revision of Year 11 materials.
- Identification of another group of students drawn from a larger area of the State.
- Consideration of further subjects to add to the existing range.

STAGE 5: 1978, 1979

- Evaluation of the scheme's operation in 1977, using indicators which include the TAE results of the first group of students.
- Continued use and review of materials.
- Revision of Year 12 materials and preparation in new subject areas.
- Production of course materials for distribution to senior high schools in 1979, designed to increase the choice of subjects available to students.
- Expansion to include the remaining areas of the State.

Map of Western Australia, indicating the location of students participating in the Isolated Students Matriculation Scheme in 1979.



THE CHIDLEY EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chidley Centre, located in the Perth suburb of Mosman Park, is a unique educational innovation in Australia. Since its opening in 1976, it has offered a residential service to children from remote country areas who experience learning difficulties.

To appreciate the significance of the Chidley Centre, it is necessary to understand the geography of Western Australia and the traditional pattern of educational provision for children in country areas.

Western Australia is a land of approximately 2.6 million square kilometres. The population of this huge area slightly exceeds 1.2 million persons. More than two-thirds of this number live in the metropolitan area of the capital city, Perth. The next largest population centre is Bunbury (20 000) and there are only six other population centres in excess of 10 000 persons. Hence, huge tracts of Western Australia, particularly the arid centre, are virtually uninhabited. Many small towns are scattered throughout the State, supporting the interests of mining and grazing communities.

In Western Australia, as in the other States of the Commonwealth, the control of education is centralized in the major city. Although in recent years there has been a growing tendency towards regionalization and decentralization of administration, relatively strong Head Office control of schools still continues, regardless of their distance from Perth. The most remote schools in the State are likely to provide a similar curriculum and have access to school resources that are similar to those in the Perth urban area. Staffing is a function that is also largely centralized. Permanent employees are expected, if called upon, to serve in any part of the State. This centralized form of administration has meant that, in principle, communities, no matter where their location, can expect an equal standard of school provision. The range of services offered to the community tends to depend not on the remoteness of the community, nor the affluence of the community, but upon the size of the school required by the community. Larger schools, with consequently larger numbers of staff members and pupil enrolments, have been able to offer specialist services that could not be afforded in small schools. Specialist school guidance and psychological services are an important case in point.

The education of children living in isolated locations poses special problems. Of particular importance is the provision of remedial and psychological services to such children. Even in large schools, with specialist remedial education staff, and with access to guidance officers and school psychologists, the diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties is a difficult task that taxes both resources and the classroom teachers. For children in small remote schools, and for children living at home and working on correspondence lessons, problems of diagnosis and remediation are more acute.

Very often the factors which underlie a learning disability are many-fold and complex. In these cases, diagnosis may require sophisticated testing and examination, and is very time-consuming. The development of special remediation programmes usually requires a full appreciation of the child's learning disabilities and the necessary resources may not be available, even within larger metropolitan schools. There is a growing awareness that these difficulties must be detected and attended to as early as possible in the development of the child. Failure to respond quickly to these problems may seriously impair the child's future educational and social attainments.

At present, for cost and logistic reasons, most specialist diagnostic and remediation services are located in the metropolitan area of Perth and, in some instances, in larger country centres. It has been the pattern that children in small country communities and in remote areas who suffer from some form of physical or educational handicap must travel, in many cases considerable distances, in order to receive specialized diagnosis and educational assistance. Because the diagnosis and development of individualized remediation programmes is complex and time-consuming, parents have been required to board in Perth, sometimes for extended periods of time. Apart from the costs of boarding away from home, which for many parents is prohibitive, there are also problems of separation of young children from parents. The Chidley Centre has been developed in order to meet the needs of these children and parents.

2. THE CHIDLEY EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

2.1 Facilities

The Chidley Point site is located in the Perth metropolitan area, 16 kilometres from the city centre. Some educationists favoured locating the Centre in a larger country town, closer to the communities that it would serve. However, the two most significant arguments in favour of the Perth location were the proximity to major medical, psychological, education and other essential services, and an awareness that a more remote location would have made more difficult the recruitment of specialist staff. A further factor is that the students who attend Chidley come from all parts of the State, with the result that a location other than Perth would be less central for many students.

The Centre provides residential, remedial and general educational facilities for a maximum of 40 students. In the residential section, there are two cottages which each have a house mother and two live-in staff. Each cottage caters for 20 students, five to a divided room.

The involvement of parents is seen as an important function of the Centre. Parents are encouraged to visit the Centre at some point during the child's stay. Four units are provided for parents who wish to accompany their children or who wish to participate in the programme. Three parents can be accommodated per unit.

The cost to the parent for full board is $5.00 daily, and $2.50 for each accompanying child. Financial assistance is available on application to the Minister for Education for those parents who are unable to meet the cost fully.

The remedial section consists basically of a multi-disciplinary assessment centre, which includes facilities for remedial, psychological, social and special therapy services. The administration centre is located in this section.

The educational complex has been designed along open-plan lines, including spaces of varying size and function, individual study carrels, a library-resource centre, seminar rooms, conference rooms and other specialized facilities. Staff claim that the open design reflects the sense of space with which country children are familiar. It also gives a child who is angry or frustrated by failure the opportunity to walk away to avoid a confrontation and the loss of face. In another part of the Centre there is a hall-gymnasium which can be used as a dining hall, an enclosed swimming pool, and an industrial kitchen.

The Centre has been designed and built to avoid the traditional demarcation between home and school. Living and working accommodation have been carefully integrated, as the plan in Figure 1 shows.

2.2 Staffing

Chidley Educational Centre's professional staff consists of a principal, a psychologist, and seven teachers, one of whom is a physical education specialist. All have had training in special education.

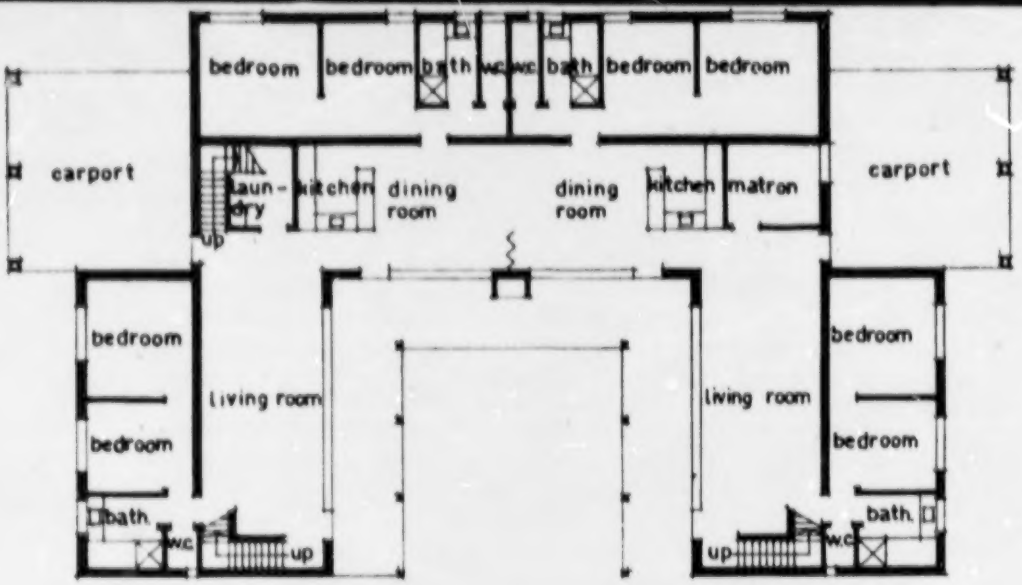
A large support staff is required to effectively manage the operations of the Centre. Two of these are house mothers, who work from when the children rise at 7.00 a.m. until 9.30 p.m. (when lessons begin) and from 3.30 p.m. until 9.00 p.m., when the children retire. These women both have had experience in foster-mother situations, and they stay overnight in a flat above the children's bedrooms to be on call when required. House parents and support staff are not necessarily professionally trained. Thus, some children, especially those with behaviourally based problems, cannot be catered for adequately within the boarding facilities. These children are referred elsewhere.

Four trainee teachers spend 24 hours per fortnight on supervisory duties in return for a single-bedroom furnished flat and meals. There are also six part-time staff who carry out supervision, mainly at the week-ends, bringing the total supervisory staff to 12 - a bare minimum in the view of the professional staff.

Each member of the professional and supervisory staff (except the principal, house mother and psychologist) takes one or two children as their special charges. In this way, each child has a 'guardian' in the Centre who acts to some degree as a surrogate parent. The guardians write to parents to reassure them, and keep up contact with children for a time after they leave the Centre. As well, a laundress, contract cook, gardener, maintenance worker, and six cleaners are employed by the Centre. In all, the Chidley Centre is staffed by 34 professional and support staff.

2.3 The Children

One hundred and seventy eight children attended Chidley in 1976-77. The table on page 34 indicates the percentage of students originating from each category of primary school and each region of the State. The categories refer to the student enrolment of the school. Schools with more than 300 students are designated class I, those with 100-299 are designated class II, those with 26-99 are designated class III and those with 25 students or less are designated class IV. Primary schools with less than 100 students are likely to have mixed grades of students (e.g. Years 3, 4 and 5 students may be combined to form one class).



COTTAGE

Fig.1

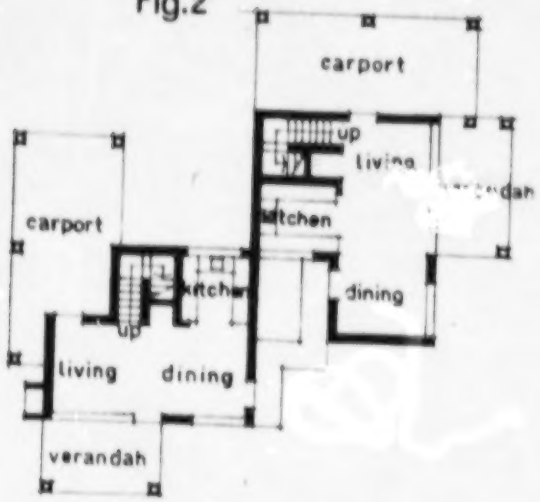
RESOURCE CENTRE

Fig.3

Figure 1: The Chidley Educational Centre

PARENT ACCOMMODATION

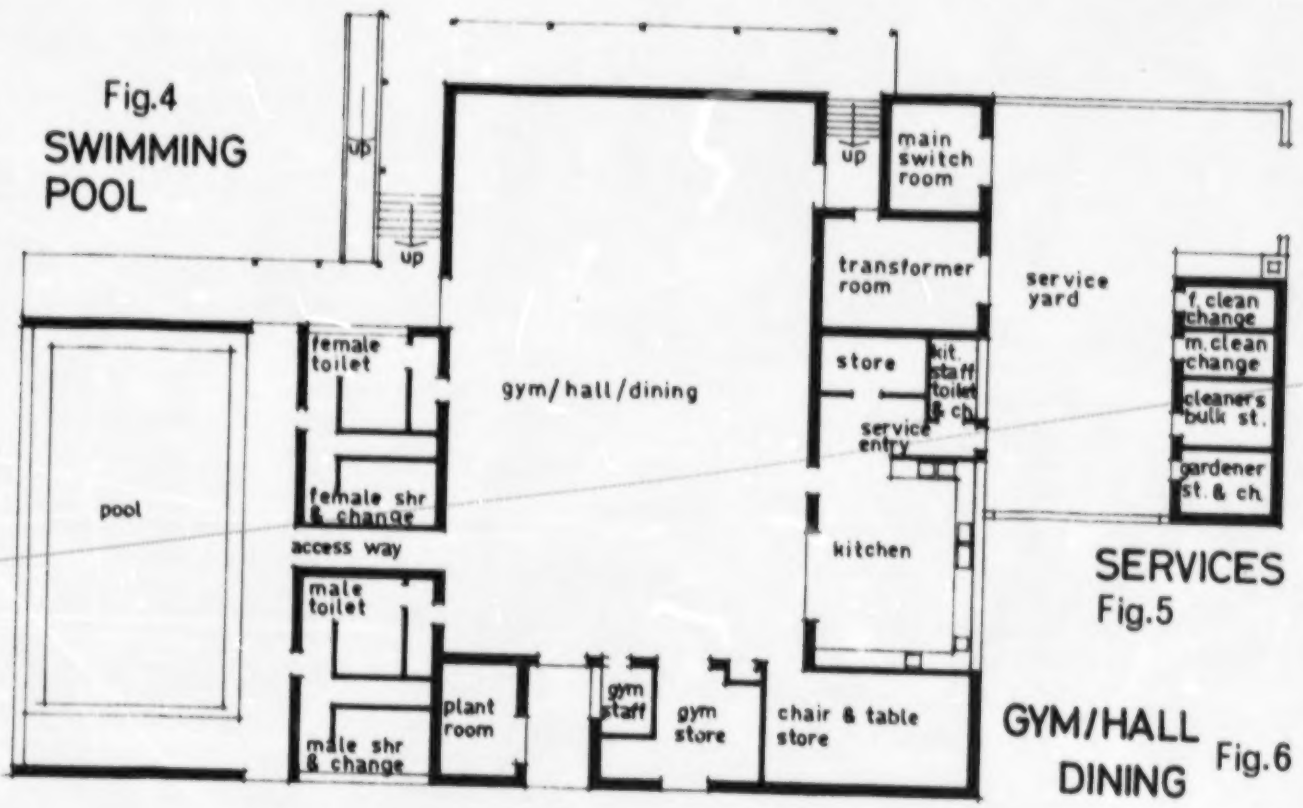
Fig.2



BLOCK PLAN

Fig.4

SWIMMING POOL



SERVICES

Fig.5

GYM/HALL DINING

Fig.6

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF CHIDLEY CENTRE STUDENTS, 1979-77, BY REGION AND SCHOOL SIZE

Region	Category of School						Regional %
	I	II	III	IV	Corres-pondence	Non-Govt	
Metropolitan	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	0.6%
South-West	6.8	6.3	4.0	-	-	1.7	18.8%
Wheat-belt	7.4	6.3	4.5	2.3	-	1.2	21.7%
Goldfields	1.7	1.2	1.7	-	-	0.6	5.1%
Murchison	0.6	-	2.8	-	4.0	-	7.4%
North-West	22.3	5.7	4.6	-	1.2	0.6	34.3%
Kimberley	2.9	6.8	1.2	0.5	0.6	-	12.0%
	42.3%	26.3%	18.8%	2.8%	5.7%	4.1%	100 %

The figures above provoke some speculation about the nature and consequences of isolation. For example, although 42 per cent of Chidley's students came from schools with enrolments of 400 or more, a majority of this group were from the north of the State. In the north, distances between schools of that size are likely to be great, sometimes in excess of 300 kilometres. Despite the fact that these students attended large schools, they lived in relatively small towns that were quite isolated from other population centres. Under these circumstances, access to remedial facilities is extremely difficult.

Further south, in the South-West and wheat-belt regions that lie within 500 kilometres of Perth, provision of resources to assist children with major learning difficulties is still an enormous problem. Again, geographical factors can account for this, since in these areas, towns are more numerous but are, nevertheless, scattered at considerable distances from one another. Unlike northern towns, which tend to be mining or port settlements, many southern towns have a small population which services a larger, but scattered, population resident in surrounding farm districts. Even in the south, the schools may have no greater access to special education resources than the isolated schools of the North-West.

To date, relatively few Aboriginal students have been referred to the Centre. Approximately five per cent of the Centre's enrolments during 1976-77 were Aboriginal. Staff have reported a high success rate in overcoming the learning difficulties experienced by this group. This has been attributed in part to the support that these children received from parents and local schools.

It may be that more Aboriginal students with learning difficulties are not referred because some principals consider that the necessary parental support is not present. Although all Aboriginal students referred to the Centre have been admitted, it is apparent that, in some cases, much more support is needed upon the return of the child to his home. For instance, one such student attended five different schools in the six months following his three-month stay at Chidley. The follow-up procedures in cases such as this become problematic.

3. THE PROGRAMME

The Chidley Centre admits students as vacancies arise, so that there is a continuous flow of children in and out of the Centre throughout the year. There are seldom more than five new in-takes in a week, except at the beginning of a school term (February, May and September) when as many as 10 may be accepted. All students, therefore, enter an already established social situation, and are buoyed up to some extent by the happy and settled atmosphere. The 'experienced' students generally are very sensitive to the newcomers' feelings of homesickness, and help to alleviate the pain of adjustment. A child usually stays at Chidley for three to six months.

Homesickness, perhaps surprisingly, is not a major problem. Typically, the younger students exhibit the symptoms of homesickness in the first week and then settle rapidly, while the older students tend to be confident initially, but occasionally suffer a subsequent bout of depression. In almost three years, only three children have been sent home because they were unable to bear being away from their parents.

Once a child has been at Chidley for two or three weeks, he begins a programme which, though individualized, contains five basic steps: assessment and diagnosis, programme development, implementation of learning strategies, transition before departure and follow-up. The delay prior to the programme is deliberate, since it enables behaviour patterns to become established. It also allows the doctor and psychologist to be seen in a non-threatening light, while bonds of familiarity can be formed with the teacher.

After the settling period, a date is set for a conference between staff and the child's parents, when discussion of his learning difficulties occurs. Parents are invited to stay at the Centre in the assessment week which precedes the conference. During this week, the child is examined by a doctor, who arranges referrals to specialists if necessary, and talks with the child's parents if they are present. Intensive psychological and educational assessments are made during the first four days. All the teaching staff are trained in educational diagnosis and test interpretation. The Centre affords a near-ideal situation in which to thoroughly assess students.

Each teacher takes a group of six or seven students, including one who is new to the Centre. While the other students work on established programmes, the teacher can concentrate on diagnostic work for the new student.

The room in which the conferences occur is equipped with closed-circuit television units and a videotape machine. These enable the child's reactions in testing situations (which have been monitored and recorded during the assessment week) to be studied. This allows all staff to view a particular case together and share expertise as well. Similarly, by using the video, the staff can demonstrated to the parents where the difficulty lies. Several of the testing rooms are equipped with one-way mirrors, behind which are situated observation rooms to permit further study by teachers and parents of the child during this assessment period.

The conference at the end of the assessment week pieces together the observations of the various members to ascertain the nature of the learning difficulty. Teaching strategies are discussed, and an indication is given of the probable duration of the child's stay. If the parents are not able to attend, a report is sent to them to obtain their approval and support. The child's school principal also receives a report and is invited to send a teacher to visit the Centre during the last two weeks of the child's programme.

Following the week of assessment and diagnosis, the child's teacher prepares a programme of learning which the child will undertake at Chidley. Staff monitor the child's progress at all stages, through informal discussions and formally in conferences.

Tours to the city, to the beach resorts and to the zoo are just a few of the ventures included in the substantial enrichment programme at Chidley. Provided within the Centre are a fully equipped gymnasium and a swimming pool to ensure that the children's recreation time is spent enjoyably, while also assisting them to improve body co-ordination and to learn various physcial skills. The Centre's physcial education teacher has devised, and supervises, a structured recreation programme. The pool is especially useful to any child with physical handicaps.

Children may board out at week-ends if they have relations or friends of the family in the metropolitan area. Teachers invite those without city relations to spend at least one week-end at their homes, and regularly take children on week-end excursions.

Parents are welcome to stay at the Centre at any time while their child is there, Usually, though, the parents are only involved in the assessment procedures and in occasional, informal visits. Staff encourage parents to include themselves in the remediation process and consider that involvement can obviate the feelings of guilt that the parents may have for their child's 'failure'. For some who are diffident about helping their child, it can be encouraging to see that they can be competent with other children at the Centre. Consequently, they then find it easier to teach their own child.

Some parents may be invited to the Centre during the child's stay for specific purposes. For instance, in one interesting case a child had been on correspondence, and his mother had been an important support. There was a need for his mother to learn some new teaching skills before the boy returned home. She was persuaded to teach her son in the Centre's observation room, and staff devised some new, helpful strategies that she could use at home. The boy's correspondence school teacher also took part in the programme. Other reasons where parents have been asked to return include cases when children have been ill, and some cases when a child's behaviour has been inconsistent. In these cases, parents provide emotional support to the children and, often, valuable advice to the staff under these circumstances.

1. During the first week of a child's stay, an individualized programme begins, usually with intensive psychological and educational testing.

2. After a week of assessing the child, the Chidley Educational Centre staff hold a conference to ascertain the nature of the child's difficulty and to plan teaching strategies. Parents are invited to this conference.

4. The Chidley staff includes a physical education specialist who has devised and supervises a structured recreation programme.

5. Homesickness is not a major problem at Chidley, since new students enter an established, settled and happy atmosphere which a large support staff help to maintain.

Until 1978, the child was returned to his local school with a programme 'package', which consisted of a detailed four-week programme, and the initial psychological and educational assessment and support materials. It was hoped that by the end of the month, the child's teacher would continue the individualized programme himself. However, this approach to follow-up was unsuccessful for various reasons. In a few instances, the package was not used at all, while less than five per cent of schools returned to Chidley detailed reports about children's progress. Furthermore, children were being assimilated into normal class work instead of continuing with an individualized programme. Although some teachers reacted unfavourably to the advice, others worked conscientiously with the programme package, but found it difficult to implement.

Recently, however, a different approach has been adopted, entailing two major changes. Students now experience a transition period, prior to their departure from the Centre, in which they work with the sorts of resources that are likely to be used in their own schools. In essense, they are 'weaned off' the sophisticated and ample resources of the Centre. The second change is that the child's teacher and, if possible, his principal, are invited to Chidley to participate in the transition phase. This has had a number of benefits. Teachers have worked with the Centre's staff, parents have been able to discuss their children openly with the teachers, and the individual children have seen their teachers showing special interest in them.

Chidley's staff are optimistic that the increased contact with local schools will pay dividends. However, the better support obtained in this way will need to be balanced against the additional expense of providing replacement teachers and transport costs for the local teachers.

The recent appointment of an itinerant guidance officer to liaise with small schools and children on correspondence is likely to strengthen the follow-up available in the most isolated areas. It is also to be expected that the number of referrals from such areas will rise.

The recent growth of regional resource centres with advisory teachers competent in the area of remedial teaching should, in the long term, similarly strengthen follow-up procedures.

4. DEVELOPMENTS AND PROBLEMS

The main problem identified in the operation of the Chidley Educational Centre has been the difficulty of ensuring adequate follow-up once a child returns home. Local teachers often have not had the expertise or the time to take the special needs of the ex-Chidley child into account. Similarly, the high turnover in staffing of rural schools is a problem in that follow-up programmes may be disrupted when the child's teacher is transferred from the region. However, the involvement of local teachers and principals, mentioned in the previous section, represents a significant development to improve follow-up. It remains to be seen whether the initial promise of this development reaches fruition in the classroom.

Other problems occur in that parents, too, have sometimes lacked the confidence to work with the child as recommended. In a few cases, the domestic situation itself seems to have been a major factor in the child's learning difficulties.

However, a majority of parents now are staying at Chidley for at least a part of the time that their children are there. Usually four or five parents are present in any week, with the result that approximately 70 per cent of children have had their parents with them at some stage. An increase in this figure is unlikely because of accommodation limits.

A related development which is under review is to shorten the initial stay by the child, return him to school for as much as a year, and bring him back for a further period of assessment and diagnosis. This would enable the Chidley Centre to monitor the progress of the child over a much longer time than is presently possible. Staff would then be in a position to gauge the longer-term effects of their work.

Perhaps the most promising development is the greater communication between various agencies in the country and metropolitan areas which will lessen the 'isolation' of Chidley. Thus, increasingly, Chidley is being seen as an adjunct to school, with the school and the parents taking a greater responsibility for the necessary remediation.

WILLIAM C. BROWN, Government Printer, Western Australia